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AN OLD STORY.*

A ROUMANIAN FOLK SONG.

BY R. H. STODDARD.

IF I could only have known
I might not suffer so;
But I was only a woman,
And how was I to know?

It is woman's fate to love,
And where she loves to believe;
Till she learns too soon and too late,
How lightly men deceive.

I was young, young, and alone,
And fond and fair to see;
But I opened my heart to a man
Who shut his heart to me!

When that which is coming shall come,
At noonday, or midnight, or morn,
He will not be by my bedside,
Nor care when his child is born!

Should I say to the child—, "Thou art born!"
Before its small voice cried,
It would answer in pitiful looks,
"It were better I had died!"

* This poem was written by Mr. Stoddard at a date which cannot now be accurately determined. In October, 1897, Stoddard, whose health was then failing, dictated it to Mr. Henry Edward Rood, who at that time was associated with him in work of literary criticism, telling Mr. Rood to publish it or withhold it from publication, as he deemed best, after Stoddard's life was ended.

Much better. So die, child, die!
This world is no place for thee;
And since thou art mine, poor thing,
No longer the place for me!

Show me the road to the churchyard,
For surely the dead will be,
Once I am there, more kind
Than the living are to me.

And whether I come alone,
Or with a child at my breast,
They will let me lie among them,
And share their lasting rest!

R. H. STODDARD.